

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method for enhancing the functionality of an electronic message,
2 comprising the steps of:
3 receiving the electronic message;
4 obtaining a command instruction from the electronic message; and
5 performing a function responsive to the step of obtaining.

1 2. The method of claim 1,
2 wherein the command instruction indicates an application provider for
3 performing the function.

1 3. The method of claim 1,
2 wherein the command instruction is a Uniform Resource Locator ("URL").

1 4. The method of claim 1,
2 wherein the step of performing a function includes the steps of:
3 determining an application provider from the command instruction;
4 and
5 sending a Request to the application provider to perform the
6 function.

1 5. The method of claim 4, including the step of:

2 preparing the Request based on the command instruction.

1 6. The method of claim 4, further including the steps of:
2 receiving a Response from the application provider; and
3 modifying the message responsive to receiving the Response.

1 7. The method of claim 6, further including the step of:
2 sending the modified message to a destination.

1 8. The method of claim 1,
2 wherein the command instruction includes:
3 a host and a file which indicate an application provider for
4 performing the function; and
5 at least one parameter which indicates information to be delivered
6 to the application provider.

1 9. The method of claim 1,
2 wherein the command instruction is included in the received message as an
3 Internet shortcut file.

1 10. The method of claim 4,
2 wherein the Request is sent using an HTTP POST command.

1 11. An article of manufacture including an information storage medium
2 wherein is stored information for programming a computer to:
3 receive an electronic message having a destination address;
4 alter the destination address of the message; and
5 send the message based on the altered destination address.

1 12. An article of manufacture wherein information is stored for programming
2 a computer as in claim 11,
3 wherein the altered destination address identifies a computing device which
4 will perform a function on the message.

1 13. An article of manufacture wherein information is stored for programming
2 a computer as in claim 11,
3 wherein the message includes a command instruction which indicates an
4 application provider which will perform a function.

1 14. An article of manufacture wherein information is stored for programming
2 a computer as in claim 11,
3 wherein the message includes a return address, and wherein the computer
4 is programmed to modify the return address to identify a computing device which
5 will perform a function responsive to a returned message.

1 15. An article of manufacture wherein information is stored for programming
2 a computer as in claim 13,

3 wherein the command instruction includes:

4 a host and file which indicate the application provider for
5 performing the function; and

6 at least one parameter, and at least one associated value which
7 indicates information to be delivered to the application provider.

1 16. An article of manufacture wherein information is stored for programming
2 a computer as in claim 11,

3 wherein a command instruction is included in the electronic message as an
4 Internet shortcut file.

1 17. An apparatus for providing a function responsive to receiving a Request,
2 comprising:

3 a processor; and

4 a processor readable storage medium in communication with the processor,
5 containing processor readable program code for programming the apparatus to:

6 receive the Request;

7 perform a function responsive to an instruction included in the
8 Request; and,

9 prepare a Response subsequent to performing the function.

1 18. The apparatus of claim 17,
2 wherein the Response includes instructions and data, wherein the
3 instructions include information for disposal of the data.

1 19. The apparatus of claim 17,
2 wherein the processor readable program code for programming the
3 computer to perform a function includes programming the computer to:
4 deliver the Response using an HTTP POST command.

1 20. The apparatus of claim 19,
2 wherein the Response includes a parameter, a value associated with the
3 parameter, and a data stream.

1 21. The apparatus of claim 19,
2 wherein the Request is in the form of an HTTP POST command.

1 22. The apparatus of claim 19,
2 wherein the Request includes a host, a file, a parameter, a value associated
3 with the parameter, and a data stream.

1 23. The apparatus of claim 22,
2 wherein the host and file indicate the apparatus for providing the function;
3 and

4 wherein the at least one parameter, and at least one associated value
5 indicate information to be delivered to the apparatus.

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